

Old Dominion University

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Poetry Slam 2021

Undergraduate Student Events

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### Just One Story

Chera Broadnax

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I don't think I breathed the whole time  
Or if I did, it wasn't deep enough or worth remembering  
I tried to keep my eyes on the pages  
I kept telling myself, just read the book  
But I couldn't  
My eyes kept moving forward to the top of the screen trying to gauge the response of the teacher  
If I could not see myself speaking on the video, I wouldn't have known I was reading  
All I could hear was my heart beating  
All I could feel was my chest rising and a light sweat start to break  
This shouldn't be an issue I remind myself  
But the silence between me requesting to read a story featuring a Black female protagonist and  
the teacher agreeing is deafening  
When I can't hear my heart, I hear the ringing of the silence and the panic that ensued  
I feel the apology for asking that I swallowed as it sits in my chest  
I have done nothing wrong  
It is Black History Month  
How can I do this internship and not read at least one story about a happy Black family?  
How do I justify that?  
I can't  
So I read the story  
And when it was over everything hurt  
But I smiled  
And on we went, back to the regular programming, some bullshit about a fucking bear.

Just One Story  
Chera Broadnax  
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